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SHORTGRASS COUNTRY by Monte Noelke

At the last shearing in April, we must have hauled in between 40 and 50 sacks of wool, or less than 10,000 pounds. The harvest took a couple of shearing days and kept 14 shearers and cowboys busy. Other matters fell to the side.

For example, 5500 bushels of mail order catalogs accumulated in the delayed delivery bin at the Mertzon post office. Mail clerks grew so tired of sticking overload notices in my box, they started making marks like a domino score on the yellow cards.

Labels on the catalogs spell "Noelke" in about 14 different ways, beginning with the extreme of "Knowley" and extending over to "Nokie." Somewhere in our country, a service must sell a sucker list. In October each fall, Mother and I do our Christmas shopping by mail. After each season about a dozen new companies a day send their catalogs.

One bigshot art gallery up in D.C. calls every six weeks during nap time to offer every type of treasure from portions of the Dead Sea Scrolls to John Audubon's sketch book. Rating his scales talk in p.s.i. gives him a pressure rating the same as the Goodyear blimp at tie down on a 104 F. afternoon. I am always so drugged by sleep, he wastes five minutes of time before he can be shut off.

The *Wall Street Journal* had a story last year about an hombre who learned to trick telephone solicitors into revealing their sponsors. The way he worked was to show a lot of enthusiasm for the deal, claiming he'd been planning on ordering or subscribing to that very thing. Next, in the same cordial tone, he'd request the name of the company. If they slipped up and gave out the name, he'd hang up and write the corporate headquarters demanding \$500 for invasion of privacy.

The same script is ready by my telephone, but the only guy who ever calls, besides the art salesman, is an insurance annuity peddler, and he's having such a tough time making living I wouldn't file on him for breaking and entering.

After shearing, a girl helping in Mertzon called a multitude of 800 numbers asking for relief. One big department chain sent four catalogs in one mail run. In the same post was a letter stating by son's birthday present was on back order.